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C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 001474

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION UPDATE: QATAR

REF: STATE 146470

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (d).

1. (C) Post delivered reftel points, including the offer to meet Qatari officials at The Hague, to the MFA. Ambassador had previously discussed Washington's offer to send officials to Doha before or after Ramadan 2005 to discuss the CWC Challenge Inspections issue. Post has also delivered the draft MOU to the Qatari government. The GOQ acknowledges that it is aware of the issue. Despite follow-up inquiries since the fall of 2004, post has not been able to obtain any answer from the GOQ.

Reasons for Stalled Action on CWC

2. (C) Post notes that bilateral relations, while excellent in their military-to-military aspect, are complicated and strained by differences over the satellite channel Al Jazeera. A number of worthy initiatives, including high-priority debt relief for Iraq, are caught up in this issue. The Qatari Foreign Minister, Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, has told us that debt relief, for example, won't be announced until misunderstandings over Al Jazeera are resolved and relations return to a normal footing, to include top-level meetings in Washington. Other activities are similarly stalled.

3. (C) Post believes that, given ongoing efforts to improve Al Jazeera, progress on CWC could come in late 2005 or early 2006, when we hope to resume the bilateral Strategic Dialogue. In the mean time, post will continue to seek a response from the GOQ.

UNTERMEYER